CONFERENCE REPORT H.Rept. 106-319, Dated 9/14/99

- House passed on 9/15/99 by a vote of 292 to 126.
- Senate passed on 9/16/99 by a vote of 54 to 38.

Public Buildings Service

- Federal Buildings Fund (FBF) Aggregate New Obligation Authority (NOA) \$5,342,416,000 a
 decrease of \$103,100,000 from the requested budget authority.
- New Construction NOA \$74,979,000 for FDS consolidation in Montgomery County, MD and various border stations nationwide. Non-prospectus projects receive \$8,000,000. \$20,782,000 of funds provided under P.L. 104-208 is rescinded but shall remain in the FBF.
- No Courthouse Construction funding. No appropriation to the fund.
- Repair and Alterations (R&A) and associated design and construction services \$598,674,000 -\$333,000,000 shall be spent on basic R&A. No amounts for specific projects, however GSA is to provide to the Committees on Appropriations a plan for funds expenditure within 15 days of enactment of this Act.
- Directs GSA to undertake the first construction phase of the renovation of the Department of the Interior Headquarters Building in Washington, DC.
- Of basic R&A, committee encourages GSA to use \$1,600,000 for R&A to Kansas City Courthouse at 811 Grand Avenue, Kansas City, MO, and \$1,250,000 for R&A to Federal Courthouse at 40 Center Street, New York, NY.
- Building Operations \$1,580,909,000 of which \$475,000 available for Plains States De-population Symposium and \$1,974,000 available for establishing and maintaining telecommuting centers, specifically \$150,000 for Winchester, VA and \$200,000 for Woodbridge, VA.
- Rental of Space approved as requested at \$2,782,186,000.

- Directs GSA to utilize \$500,000 to undertake a study and conceptual design of the combined law enforcement center in St. Petersburg, FL. Report due to Committees on Appropriations by February 1, 2000.
- Urges GSA to consider US Olympic Committee's (USOC) need for additional space and to give priority to the USOC's request to gain title or acquire the Federal Office Building in Colorado Springs, CO if the US Air Force Space Command vacates the property.
- No funds from this Act may be used to convert the Old Post Office, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC to any other use, without prior Congressional approval.

Policy and Operations

- Provides \$116,223,000, which includes \$2,500,000 to be used for the Rapid Service Valuation and Preparation Access Program and \$1,000,000 for the program to validate the access performance of information technology.
- Provides \$2,000,000 to continue the pilot projects for digital learning technologies: \$1,000,000 for the
 development of a digital medical education project and \$1,000,000 for the development of IT hardware,
 software, network infrastructures and activities that will be the basis for 21st Century Distributed
 Learning Environment in Education.
- Provides \$275,000 for a feasibility study on developing a virtual archive storage terminal.
- Section 1122 Program GSA with the Secretary of Defense produces and maintains a catalog for law enforcement equipment suitable for counter-drug activities will return the program to the original 10 Federal Supply Schedules. GSA and Secretary of Defense must consult with appropriate committees prior to any actions to expand the program.
- Urges GSA to continue review of per diem rates, to modify procedures for establishing per diem rates to assure future surveys accurately reflect the cost of federal travel, and that rates are not too low.

Office of the Inspector General

Receive \$33,317,000 - \$600,000 below the requested budget authority

Former Presidents Fund Allowance

Received the requested budget authority of \$2,241,000.

GSA General Provisions

- \$20,782,000 of funds provided under P.L. 104-208 is rescinded but shall remain in the FBF.
- Directs GSA to sell to the Columbia Hospital for Women vacant property at its GSA-appraised market value (\$14,000,000 plus interest) for the expressed purpose of providing medical services and related uses unless otherwise approved by the GSA Administrator.
- Authorizes the GSA Administrator to offer voluntary separation incentives from October 1, 1999 to April 30, 2001 in order to provide the necessary flexibility to carry out FSS closures of distribution centers, forward supply centers, and associated programs.
- Renames the Bismarck, ND courthouse and federal building after William L Guy
- Deletes JFMIP provisions. (See Title VI General Provisions)

Title V and Title VI – General Provisions

- Continues prohibition of funds for abortions and/or related administrative expenses in connection with the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) that provide benefits or coverage for abortions, except in cases where the mother's life is endangered, rape, or incest.
- Allows Congressional pay raise.

- Makes permanent the provision to promote protection of federal law enforcement officers who intervene in certain situations.
- Continues policy that no provisions regarding contraceptive coverage will apply to any existing or future FEHBP plan if the carrier objects on the basis of religious beliefs.
- Authorizes Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP) member agencies the use of fiscal year 2000 funds to finance an appropriate share of JFMIP administrative costs, not to exceed a total of \$800,000.
- Authorizes JFMIP member agencies to transfer funds to GSA's Policy and Operations account to finance their appropriate share of JFMIP, not to exceed a total of \$7,000,000.
- Authorizes agencies to use appropriated federal funds to provide childcare in federal facilities after notifying the Committees on Appropriations and receipt of OPM regulations. OPM to report on the implementation and use of this provision to the Committees on Appropriations no later than September 1, 2000. (see also conferees comments on OPM responsibilities).
- Increases the President's salary from \$200,000 to \$400,000.
- Transfers General Accounting Office (GAO) personnel that perform the JFMIP functions to GSA. OPM will provide one SES allocation for the position of Executive Director of the JFMIP.
- Rates of basic pay for federal employee statutory pay systems shall increase 4.8 percent in fiscal year 2000.
- Allows women to breastfeed children at any location in a Federal building or on Federal property, provided that the woman and child are authorized to be present at that location.
- Authorizes OPM to grant agency requests for voluntary early retirement for federal employees.
- Deletes House provision that no funds from this or any other Act made available may be used at the Border Patrol Academy, in Charleston, South Carolina.

Other – Directs Customs/GSA assessment/study of ports of entry (see p. 12 below)

HOUSE PASSAGE 7/15/99 – FLOOR ACTIONS

- House passed Treasury-Postal Appropriation, by vote of 210-209.
- Prohibits use of funds to implement, administer, or enforce any prohibition on women breastfeeding their children in Federal buildings or on Federal property. Mrs. Maloney of New York stated that the "amendment is very simple and family friendly, as American as motherhood."
- Let stand increase in President's salary from \$200,000 to \$400,000
- Let stand cost of living increase for Members of Congress.
- Let stand the section that prohibits funds for abortions or administrative expenses in connection with any FEHB plan that provides benefits or coverage for abortion.
- Small modification on contraceptive coverage. States no provisions regarding contraceptive coverage will apply to any existing or future plan if the Carrier objects on the basis of religious beliefs.

HOUSE MARKUP ON JULY 13 (FULL COMMITTEE)

MAJOR ITEMS OF INTEREST

Public Buildings Service:

- Reduced R&A and total NOA by 100 M.
- Committee did not include amounts for specific R&A Projects and programs in the bill, however the Committee expects GSA to use the funds provided to undertake the projects identified in the budget request.
- Directed GSA to use R&A funds to renovate the Department of Interior Headquarters Buildings located in Washington, D.C.

- Corrected language to allow funds made available in any previous Act for R&A prospectus projects to be escalated 10 % without prior Committee Approval. The escalation clause was not included for this year's appropriation since there is no line items to escalate.
- No funds from this or any other Act made available may be used at the Border Patrol Academy, in Charleston, South Carolina.

Other

- A "sense of Congress" statement calling for parity between the adjustments for compensation for Military and Civilian employees.
- Effective October 1, 1999, personnel of GAO employed to carry out functions of JFMIP shall be transferred to GSA. OPM shall provide GSA one permanent SES position for the Executive Director of JFMIP.

HOUSE MARKUP ON JULY 13 (FULL COMMITTEE) CHANGES TO HOUSE REPORT

- Recommends GSA expeditiously commence repairs on the Federal Building in Binghamton, New York.
- Recommends GSA, OPM and Army conduct a feasibility study regarding establishing and equipping an emergency work station/telecommuting center in the vacant office space at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. (The emergency work station / telecommuting center is in response to the interstate highway construction in the Springfield, Virginia, area.)
- Added section on Census Bureau Facilities at Suitland, Maryland, similar to the language in the Senate report.

SENATE PASSAGE 7/1/99 – FLOOR ACTIONS

Public Buildings Service

- Corrects total NOA for FBF to include \$100 million for redemption of debt and to reflect \$20.8 million rescinded remaining in the Fund.
- An amendment proposing to cut \$34,796 thousand from Repairs and Alterations and \$10,854 thousand from Policy account failed in floor action. A revised amendment was passed which directs Customs Service to utilize \$50 million to hire 500 new customs agents, funding to be found within the Customs' budget. However, Senators Grassley and Campbell indicate that, if the language is different in the House version, they will work to find the funding elsewhere during Conference.
- GSA is directed to transfer the property at 2400 M Street, NW, Washington, DC, to Columbia Hospital for Women, for \$14 million plus interest at 4.5% with payments over 30 years at \$869,000 plus interest.
- R&A and FBF totals reduced by \$17 million to help pay for HIDA drug interdiction.
- Makes available \$1.25 million for R&A of the Federal Courthouse at 40 Center Street, New York, NY

<u>Other</u>

- An amendment passed which will have policy implications on Child Care. Amendment addresses licensing requirements, accreditation standards, and evaluation perimeters.
- Funds available for fiscal year 2000 are made available to finance an appropriate share of JFMIP salaries and administrative costs. GSA may provide from government wide credit card rebates up to \$3 million in support of the JFMIP.

SENATE MARKUP ON JUNE 24 (FULL COMMITTEE) (S. 1282, S. Report 106-87)

MAJOR ITEMS OF INTEREST

Public Buildings Service:

- Construction projects approved as requested except:
 - 1. US Mission to the UN in New York denied \$4.3M.
 - 2. Montgomery Co., MD, FDA Consolidation reduced from \$55.9M to \$35M
- No Courthouse projects added.
- No appropriation approved.
- No advance appropriations approved
- Added language restores 10% escalation authority for Repair & Alterations line items.
- Repair & Alterations projects approved as requested, except reductions to:
 - 1. Chloroflourocarbons program reduced from \$20M to \$16M
 - 2. Energy program reduced from \$20M to \$16M
 - 3. Glass Fragment Retention program eliminated \$32M
- Makes available \$1.6M for R&A of Kansas City, MO courthouse
- Rental of Space and Building Operations programs both reduced by \$59.2M
- NOA for redemption of Debt omitted \$100M
- Rescission of \$20.8M, to remain in fund
- NOA figures do not add to total shown in bill
- Expanded reprogramming authority between Building Operations and Rental of Space denied.
- \$475 thousand to be made available for the Plains States De-Population Symposium.

Policy and Operations:

- Provides \$6.5M for Accessibility Program. Provides for Lorton, Governors Island, and Surplus Computers for Learning program. Denies request for Electronic Commerce.
- Of funds provided \$2.75M shall be available for North Dakota State University Virtual Archive Storage Terminal (VAST), an information warehousing project for the upper Great Plains region
- Reception and representation expenses remain at \$5K, rather than \$10K requested
- Bill does not provide for two-year funding availability for the Accessibility for the Disabled program

Office of Inspector General:

Request reduced by \$59K.

Allowances, Former Presidents:

Approved as requested.

Title VI General Provisions

• Bill does not include General Provisions Section 627 and 628 (as proposed in the President's Budget), relating to funding the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP).

Other

• Senate did not include any pay caps for Congressmen, which would permit raising pay caps in Executive Branch.

SENATE REPORT

Public Buildings Service:

- Committee is concerned that there is no courthouse construction program in the FY 2000 budget due to budget restraints. However, they are also concerned that 11 of 16 courthouses requested for FY 2000 deviated from the design guide. They expect to review the independent analysis of Court requirements before making FY 2001 decisions.
- Committee encourages GSA to work with the Courts to:
 - 1. Keep the Biloxi courthouse project on schedule
 - 2. Address issues arising from delay in funding of Erie courthouse
 - 3. Address issues re logistics, safety and space at the Burlington Courthouse and Federal Building
- The Committee understands that GSA plans to request R&A design funds for the Davenport, lowa courthouse in FY 2001, and construction funds in FY 2002.
- Directs GSA to study renovation of the City Hall Plaza in Boston, and determine what cooperative arrangements should be developed.
- Urges GSA to work with ATF on expanding space at the National Tracing Center in Martinsburg, WV
- Directs GSA to report by March 31, 2000 on the cost of demolition of the existing structures on the space known as West Heating Plant and Coal and Ash House, remediation of the property, and the estimated duration for this effort.

Policy and Operations

 Recommends funds provided to be used to require Child Care Centers to (1) comply with State and local licensing requirements and (2) comply with accreditation standards specified by the Administrator

- Urges GSA to give priority to the U.S. Olympic Committee's (USOC) request to gain title or acquire 1520 Willamette Avenue in Colorado Springs, Colorado, should that facility become vacant and deemed as surplus.
- Urges GSA to continue to review the per diem rates, particularly of the Maryland counties, and implement any appropriate changes.
- Encourages GSA to assist the Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the Winter and Paralympic Games in 2002 as well as the 2001 World Police and Fire Games in Indiana.
- Directs GSA to work with the universities of Montana, lowa, Colorado and North Dakota to assist in the
 development of a symposium to discuss the research and development requirements of a Plains
 states de-population study. Requests GSA provide the appropriate administrative assistance required
 for the symposium.
- Provides for a Nebraska State Patrol Digital Distance Learning project to create computer based training programs.
- Directs GSA to submit a report of significant environmental problems at the U.S. Census Bureau facilities in Suitland, Maryland, no later than 60 days after enactment this Act.

GSA General Provisions

- Continues a provision which allows pilot information technology projects to be repaid from the Information Technology fund.
- Corrects appropriation language in FY 1997 appropriation (PL 104-208) that would have allowed unobligated balances for new construction to lapse.
- Renames the Bismarck, ND courthouse and federal building after William L Guy
- Limits availability of FBF revenue for Rental of Space and Building Operations
- Does not included a provision upgrading the CIC director position to SES, but directs GSA to request an OPM review of appropriateness of the upgrade, and to increase GSA SES positions if warranted. Similar language is in the OPM section of the Report.

Other

- Directs ATF to work with GSA to pursue low cost headquarters site options, and to seek required funding from the Treasury Forfeiture Fund.
- Directs Customs to work with GSA to assess current conditions and infrastructure needs of ports of entry on US land borders, and to report to the Committee within 9 months of enactment of the appropriation bill.
- Includes section on Voluntary Incentive Payments (VIP) program for Financial Management Service employees in Chicago.

HOUSE MARKUP ON MAY 14 (SUBCOMMITTEE)

MAJOR ITEMS OF INTEREST

Public Buildings Service:

- No Construction projects approved except for \$8M non-prospectus item, reduced from \$10M for telecommuting centers (Building Operations to absorb.)
- No Courthouse projects added.
- No appropriation approved.
- No advance appropriations approved
- Added language restores 10% escalation authority for Repair & Alterations line items.
- Repair & Alterations approved as requested, except for \$5M reduction to Basic R&A program.
- Expanded reprogramming authority between Building Operations and Rental of Space denied.

Policy and Operations:

- Reductions from request for Electronic Commerce (\$1,710K), and Disability Access (\$10M). All else approved, including Lorton, Governors Island, and Surplus Computers for Learning program.
- Reception and representation increase from \$5K to \$10K disapproved.

Office of Inspector General:

• Request reduced by \$600K for new hires.

Allowances, Former Presidents:

Approved as requested.

GSA General Provisions

- Continues a provision which allows pilot information technology projects to be repaid from the Information Technology fund.
- Requires that courthouses requested in the FY 2001 request must be accompanied by standardized courtroom utilization information.
- Corrects appropriation language in FY 1997 appropriations (PL 104-208) that would have allowed unobligated balances for new construction to lapse.

Title V General Provisions

 Continues without change general provisions on the Buy America Act, American made products, Made in America labeling, and prohibitions on Federal Health Benefit Plans paying for abortions except in cases of rape or incest.

Title VI General Provisions

- Continues provisions for drug free workplaces, fixes prices for vehicles, allows reimbursement of GSA for space and services, encourages recycling.
- Continues provision prohibiting financing of groups by more than one Federal agency without specific statutory authority affects JFMIP funding.
- Includes GSA-proposed JFMIP funding provisions, with limitations of \$800K for the Executive Director and staff support and \$7M total, and credit card rebate provisions. Provisions allow other agencies and the GSA Policy and Operations account to finance an appropriate share of JFMIP costs.
- Provides for a CFO for the Executive Office of the President
- New provision requires agencies to reimburse qualified employees up to one-half of the cost of their professional liability insurance.
- Increases "future" President's salary from \$200K to \$400K.

Other

Includes voluntary separation (VIP) program for Treasury IG employees.

HOUSE REPORT

Public Buildings Service:

- General Statement: The Committee took action to meet its targets in part by reducing the GSA construction program by \$400M. However, they recognize that this places the critical infrastructure program in jeopardy.
- The Committee criticizes OMB for not including Courthouse construction in its budgets for the past 3 years, despite GSA's requests, and questions OMB's assignment of priorities. The committee will try to find ways to include courthouses in the FY 2000 appropriation as the bill moves through the process.
- The Committee encourages the Judicial Conference to undertake an independent review of the courthouse program, including courtroom sharing.
- Directs GSA to include minority contractors, vendors and employees in the Miami, FL courthouse, and to report on progress by February 1, 2000.
- Urges GSA to use funds available for non-prospectus construction to develop child care facilities in Central Islip, NY and San Juan, PR.
- Directs GSA to include necessary funds for Federal Building at 300 North Los Angeles Street, Los Angeles, CA, for safety and accessibility R&A in FY 2001 budget request.
- Provides within Basic R&A \$412K for renovations to Wichita, KS courthouse.
- From building operations, provides \$1.974M for telecommuting centers, including \$150K for Winchester, and \$200K for Woodbridge. Directs GSA to conduct a fair utilization study of telecommuting centers and to close underutilized centers.
- Directs GSA to use \$500K to study a combined federal, state, and local law enforcement center in St. Petersburg, FL, and to report by February 1, 2000.

Policy and Operations:

- Committee approves of GSA's action to scale back the Section 1122 program (use of GSA schedules for law enforcement activities for counter-drug activities), and expects GSA and DOD to consult with Congress before any further expansion of the program.
- Urges GSA to support Public Employees Roundtable and to provide \$100K in administrative and logistical assistance to Public Service Recognition Week activities.
- Concerned over lower per diem rates, directs GSA to review methodology and rates and to revise its procedures accordingly.

DISCRETIONARY APPROPRIATIONS - DETAIL \$(Thousands)

	Budget Request	House Recommend	Senate Recommend	Conference Agreement	House Rec. vs. Budget	Sen. Rec. vs. Budget	Conference vs. Budge
S&E, Policy and Operations	122,158	110,448	120,198	116,223	(11,710)	(1,960)	(5,935)
Office of Inspector	33,917	33,317	33,858	33,317	(600)	(59)	(600)
General Allowances, Former Pres.	2,241	2,241	2,241	2,241	0	0	(
Operating Appropriations	158,316	146,006	156,297	151,781	(12,310)	(2,019)	(6,535)

Appropriations to 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 the FBF

FEDERAL BUILDINGS FUND –NOA \$(Thousands)

-	Budget Request	House Recommend	Senate Recommend	Conference Agreement	House Rec. vs. Budget	Sen. Rec. vs. Budget	Conference vs. Budge
Construction & Acquisition	102,194	8,000	76,979	74,979	(94,194)	(25,215)	(27,215)
New York, NY, UN Mission	4,300	0	0	0	(4,300)	(4,300)	(4,300)
Roosville, MT, BS	753	0	753	753	(753)	0	(
Fort Hancock, TX, BS	277	0	277	277	(277)	0	(
Sweetgrass, MT, BS	11,480	0	11,480	11,480	(11,480)	0	(
Oroville, WA, BS	11,206	0	11,206	11,206	(11,206)	0	(
Sault Ste. Marie, MI, BS	8,263	0	8,263	8,263	(8,263)	0	(
Montgomery Co., MD, FDA Consol.	55,915	0	35,000	35,000	(55,915)	(20,915)	(20,915)
Non-Prospectus	10,000	8,000	10,000	8,000	(2,000)	0	(2,000)
FY 2001 Advance Appropriation	163,450	0	0	0	(163,450)	(163,450)	(163,450)
Washington, DC, ATF Hdqtrs	83,000	0	0	0	(83,000)	(83,000)	(83,000)
Montgomery Co., MD, FDA Consol.	80,450	0	0	0	(80,450)	(80,450)	(80,450)

FEDERAL BUILDINGS FUND – NOA (Continued) \$(Thousands)

	Budget Request	House Recommend	Senate Recommend	Conference Agreement	House Rec. vs. Budget	Sen. Rec. vs. Budget	Conference vs. Budge
Repairs and	664,869	559,869	607,869	598,674	(105,000)	(57,000)	(66,195)
Alterations							
Washington, DC, Justice Ph 2	47,226	No Separate Amounts	47,226	No Separate Amounts	N/A	0	N/A
Washington, DC, State Ph 2	10,511		10,511			0	
Woodlawn, MD, SSA Annex	25,890		25,890			0	
Montgomery, AL, FB-CT	11,606		11,606			0	
Albuquerque, NM, Chavez FB 500 Gold Ave.	8,537		8,537			0	
Sacramento, CA, Moss FB-CT	7,948		7,948			0	
Ft. Snelling, MN, Whipple FB	10,989		10,989			0	
Washington, DC, Interior Ph 1	1,100		1,100			0	
Baltimore, MD, Metro West Blg (Façade)	36,705		36,705			0	
Cleveland, OH, Celebrezze FB	7,234		7,234			0	
Anchorage, AK, FB-CT, Annex	21,098		21,098			0	

FEDERAL BUILDINGS FUND – NOA (Continued) \$(Thousands)

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	Budget	House	Senate	Conference	House Rec.	Sen. Rec.	Conference
	Request	Recommend	Recommend	Agreement	vs. Budget	vs. Budget	vs. Budge
Menlo Park, CA, USGS Bldg 1	6,831	No Separate Amounts	6,831	No Separate Amounts		0	
Menlo Park, CA, USGS Bldg 2	5,284		5,284		N/A	0	N/A
Design Program	17,715		17,715		N/A	0	N/A
Chicago, IL, 536 Clark St.	(1,372)		(1,372)			0	
Jacksonville, FL, Bennett FB	(1,930)		(1,930)			0	
Kansas City, MO, 8930 Ward Parkway	(793)		(793)			0	
Phoenix, AZ, FB-CT	(1,428)		(1,428)			0	
Detroit, MI, McNamara FB	(1,734)		(1,734)			0	
Las Vegas, NV, Foley FB-CT	(1,365)		(1,365)			0	
Lakewood, CO, DFC, Bldg 67	(676)		(676)			0	
Baltimore, MD, Fallon FB	(1,120)		(1,120)			0	
Seattle, WA, Jackson FB	(1,728)		(1,728)			0	
Portsmouth, NH, McIntyre FB	(829)		(829)			0	
Des Moines, IA, FB	(988)		(988)			0	

FEDERAL BUILDINGS FUND – NOA (Continued) \$(Thousands)

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	Budget	House	Senate	Conference	House Rec.	Sen. Rec.	Conference				
	Request	Recommend	Recommend	Agreement	vs. Budget	vs. Budget	vs. Budge				
Dallas, TX,	(1,360)	No Separate	(1,360)		No Separate	0					
Cabell FB-CT & Santa Fe FB		Amounts			Amounts						
Washington, DC, Switzer FB	(2,392)		(2,392)			0					
Chloroflourocarbons	20,000	No Separate Amounts	16,000		No Separate Amounts	(4,000)					
Energy Program	20,000		16,000			(4,000)					
Elevator Program	24,195		24,195			Ó					
Glass Fragment Retention	32,000		0			(32,000)					
Basic R&A	350,000		333,000	333,000		(17,000)	(17,000)				
Installment Acq. Payments	205,668	205,668	205,668	205,668	0	0	C				
Rental of Space	2,782,186	2,782,186	2,722,982.5	2,782,186	0	(59,203.5)	(
Building Operations	1,590,183	1,590,183	1,530,979.5	1,580,909	0	(59,203.5)	(9,274)				
Redemption of Debt	100,416	100,000	100,000	100,000	(416)	(416)	(416)				
TOTAL NOA	5,445,516	5,245,906	5,244,478	5,342,416	(199,610)	(201,038)	(103,100)				

^{*} From Building Operations, \$475,000 is to be made available for Plains States De-Population Symposium, and \$1,974,000 shall be available for until expended for acquisition, lease, construction, and equipping of flexiplace telecommuting centers.